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## **2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights National Progress** ***Montana targets federal dollars for public pre-K, launches pilot program***

*New Brunswick, NJ*—While most states enrolled more young children in public preschool, Montana remains one of seven states opting not to fund early education programs, according to *The State of Preschool 2017* report issued today by the National Institute of Early Education Research.

*The State of Preschool 2017* annual report is the only national report on state-funded preschool programs. This year's report, based on 2016-17 academic year data, includes a special section on policies affecting Dual Language Learners, and highlights changes since 2002, when NIEER began tracking state pre-K.

Montana did provide full-day, high-quality preschool for a few hundred 4-year-olds using federal Preschool Development Grant funding. Nationwide, 18 states relied on PDG funding to enhance or expand preschool programs. And policymakers recently allocated \$6 million in state funding over two years for a pilot preschool program serving 300 children.

"Recent changes in federal policy--including ESSA--make it clear that progress in early education depends more than ever on the states," said NIEER Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett. "Our report highlights which states invest best in their young children and which leave too many children behind. Montana has been slow to invest in pre-K but a pilot program perhaps signals a change."

Research shows early childhood education can help prepare all children for greater success in elementary school and beyond – but only if quality is high. Enrollment in state-funded preschool programs has more than doubled since 2002—with more than 1.5 million children now enrolled nationwide. National highlights include:

- 43 states, D.C. and Guam provide publicly funded preschool to more than 1.5 million children
- 7 states do not invest in preschool programs
- 10 states enroll 50% or more of their 4-year-olds in public pre-K
- States spent a total of \$7.6 billion on pre-K in 2016-17, a 2% increase from the previous year (inflation-adjusted) while real state spending-per-child enrolled in pre-K decreased
- AL, MI, RI are the only states meeting all 10 new quality standards benchmarks
- Most states don't know how many dual language learners are enrolled in pre-K and most do not require pre-K teachers to have *any training* specific to working with DLLs

"Most developed nations now offer universal preschool-- even China has committed to pre-K for every 4-year-old by 2020," Dr. Barnett noted. "Meanwhile, the United States has made little progress... This is no way to compete globally now--or in the future. Our first step back to leadership is quality preschool."

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*Foundation. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions in this report are solely those of the authors. For more information and detailed state-by-state profiles on quality access, and funding, please visit [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org).*

*The National Institute for Early Education Research ([www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org)) at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research. For more information, contact: Michelle Ruess [mruess@nieer.org](mailto:mruess@nieer.org) 848-932-4350*